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ABSTRACT

Ideas and activities for helping children attain success in school, in friendships and in sports are presented in this handbook for parents. The areas covered are: (1) developing a winning attitude; (2) increasing self-confidence; (3) improving reading skills; (4) gaining good study habits; (5) improving test-taking skills; (6) doing homework; (7) learning through educational and cultural activities; (8) getting along with others; and (9) developing a sense of responsibility and sportsmanship. (EM)

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HOW TO MAKE YOUR CHILD A WINNER!

A Britannica Handbook of ideas, activities and skill-builders

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A NOTE TO PARENTS

This booklet, prepared for you by Encyclopaedia Britannica, contains ideas and tips on how you can help your child become a winner—in school, in friendships, in sports.

But perhaps the most important thing to consider is that "winning" doesn't necessarily mean getting to the top of the class, the varsity sports team, an ivy league college or a fast-track career.

Children who can set goals for themselves and strive enthusiastically to attain them—whatever they may be—are the true winners. Your encouragement in helping them reach their fullest potential is the greatest gift you can give. The fact that you've requested this booklet speaks loudly and clearly of your interest in helping them. We sincerely hope it provides you with insights and new ideas.

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Developing a winning attitude

As a parent, one of the most valuable things you can do is to help your children develop a positive, winning attitude.

Children who believe they will fail often do simply out of fear, anxiety, discouragement—and, in the end, habit. But children who learn to approach new tasks, new acquaintances and new ideas with curiosity, enthusiasm, self-assurance, and a winning attitude will ultimately try more...do more...know more...and win more.

There are several things you can do to inspire a winning attitude in your children.

1. Show your interest. Psychologists agree that children whose parents believe in them are more inclined to believe in themselves and their abilities. You can demonstrate interest by involving yourself in their world. Join the PTA, for instance. Visit school and talk with teachers on Parents' Night. Help (when asked) with homework. Review test papers. Attend sporting events. Your interest and caring can motivate them and help them feel like winners.

It's also important to set aside regular times to spend alone with each child. It is important for parents to talk to their children. It is even more important for parents to *listen* to their children.

2. Praise, reward, reinforce. When your children achieve a goal; make a valiant attempt at a new task; get good grades; read a difficult story —whatever the accomplishment—let them know that you notice and approve. Give them the positive recognition they deserve! Simple praise and compliments—delivered immediately and honestly—can do more to encourage your children to be winners than anything else.

Remember, too, that while the praise of parents means everything to children, it's also important for them to win praise from others—from

teachers, from relatives, and especially from their peers. For this reason, it's important for your children to interact with people outside of the home. When your children are old enough to earn money, let them work for others instead of performing chores only around your own home. This will enable them to be rewarded by others for their efforts, and will reinforce their feeling of self-worth.

Individuals who receive praise, rewards and reinforcement as children become adults capable of giving praise, rewards and reinforcement. They become winners!

3. Help them learn from failures. Like adults, all children are bound to fail sometime. You can help turn a failure into a constructive experience by examining the ways in which children can overcome weaknesses, and by spending active time practicing and reviewing problem areas.

4. Make realistic demands. For children to think of themselves as winners, they must achieve success far more often than failure. As a parent, you must lead them into experiences that challenge them and help them grow. But make sure they don't have too many experiences that inevitably lead to failure, or they'll begin to believe they can't do anything right. ***Be realistic!*** For example, four-year-olds may be capable of learning to count, but you shouldn't also expect them to learn to read, play the piano and ride a bike at the same time. An average athlete shouldn't be expected to be the star of the team. It's better to achieve a little less--and get used to success.

Remember...the best way to raise children to become responsible, competent, confident, good adults with a good self-image is to **prove** to them they they're responsible, competent and good when they're young.

Developing self-confidence

It is not unusual to see children who are described by their parents as lacking confidence, having a negative attitude, always feeling guilty, having their feelings hurt easily, tending to give up easily, and feeling that they're not as good as other children.

These feelings usually develop when more emphasis is placed on a child's faults, failures and misbehaviors than on successes and accomplishments.

In order to eliminate a negative self-image, to build confidence and make children feel better about themselves, it is necessary to reverse the process that produced it. More attention must be given to the child's successes, accomplishments and positive personality characteristics than to failures, mistakes and misbehaviors. When this happens, the plus side of the child's personality increases, the negative side decreases, and the child's self-image improves.

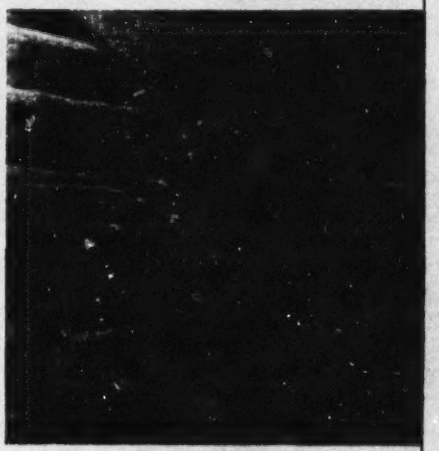
Here are some rules that every parent can use as a guide in order to help children have good, accurate, healthy self-images.

1. Teach your children to be competent. If your children are to have confidence, to think of themselves as being competent, they must have proof that they *are* competent. And the only way they can get that proof is if you introduce them to experiences they can succeed in, and then insist that they become competent. They may be reluctant or afraid or easily discouraged, but if you give in to their fears you'll only strengthen their inner feelings that they're not the kind who do well at new things. If they fail at something that is simply beyond their abilities, make sure they are also involved in other activities at which they can succeed, and make sure every achievement—no matter how small—is praised. Success begets success.

2. Like your children—and make sure they know you do. No matter how busy you are, make sure you take the time to be your children's friend, and let them know that you like them as people. Have fun together, play games, share athletic activities, go to the movies, go shopping together. Talk about your own dreams and your own feelings

so that they get a sense of you as a person. By treating them in this way, you'll be telling them that they're the kind of good, interesting individuals you would choose for a friend.

3. Teach them to do for themselves. Children never learn if they are always holding your hand. As they get to a reasonable level of maturity, insist that they do things on their own. Give them duties at home that only they are responsible for—mowing the lawn, planting the new hedge of roses, reorganizing the kitchen cabinets, vacuuming the stairs. Give them experiences that will build confidence, and each successfully completed task will build self-image. They'll see themselves as more adult, more competent, more capable of altering their own lives and changing the world around them.



In short, never do for them what they can do for themselves.

4. Give them plenty of reasons to think of themselves as good people. Parents often encourage their children to be good in sports, or to develop their talents, but forget to teach them skills in moral, altruistic behavior. There is pleasure in doing good for other people, and they should learn to experience that pleasure so that they will want to feel it again and again.

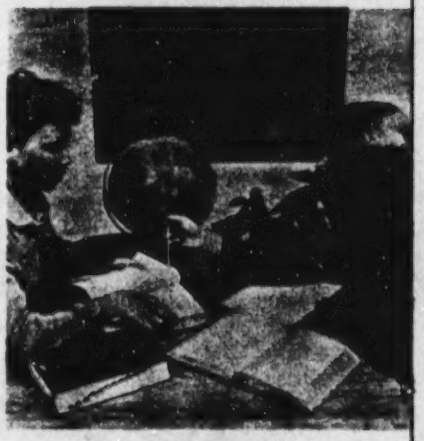
You might plan a pleasant surprise for a member of the family and have the others do something special. Take your children along to visit a sick friend. Bring them along to help a neighbor whose basement is flooded, or to help push a car out of the snow. By thinking of themselves as the kind of people who go out of their way to help others, they'll have concrete reasons to feel good about themselves. It's a feeling that will last a lifetime.

10 steps to improved reading

The skills of reading, thinking and comprehension are all closely tied together and are the most basic building blocks for success in school and throughout life. There are a number of things you can do to help your children master these skills.

1. Read aloud to preschoolers. Children who develop an appreciation for books and reading at an early age usually have an edge when they enter school. Give your children picture books, encourage them to "read" on their own, help them write and illustrate their own books about themselves, their home, their family, neighborhood, friends.

2. Make it easy for children to read —and they will! Keep books, magazines, newspapers and other reading materials around the house so that your children can pick up something to read at any time. Take them to the library, too, and show how easy it is to take out any book they like.



3. Work with your children's teachers if your children have any reading difficulties. Chances are their teachers will welcome the opportunity for you to help out by giving you practice lessons, drills, special "improvement" activities.

4. Read with your children. One leading educator suggests this approach: first, take a reading assignment your child has been given (or choose an excerpt from a favorite book) and ask your child to *quickly skim* the piece to get the general idea of its contents. Then, ask him or her to give the assignment a *second skimming*, this time watching for important ideas and what the author is saying. Both of these steps should take just a few minutes. Finally, ask for a more thorough reading of the piece, this time noting important details that support the main ideas.

5. Help your children organize larger reading assignments. Urge them to take notes as they read, or outline the material in their own words (not picking up verbatim from the text). This can help enormously later when they must review for tests.

6. Focus on other important reading skills. Whether reading or listening, ask your children to watch for main ideas, details, facts and opinions, cause-and-effect relationships. Ask them to draw conclusions from what they have read or heard. This will help children approach reading in a thoughtful, analytic way rather than simply reading words on a page.

7. Help your children develop listening skills, which are closely related to reading skills. After they have watched a tv show, seen a movie, listened to a radio program or family discussion, ask them to rephrase what they have heard. Another way to encourage listening-skill development is to create "following directions" games. These can range from cooking projects (you read the directions, they measure and mix) to family "treasure hunts."

8. Make reading as relevant and interesting as possible. Give your children materials they'll *want* to read: book versions of favorite movies, for instance, or articles about favorite hobbies, sports, rock stars. Hold family discussions in which they can report on what they have learned.

9. Use reference books (dictionaries, encyclopaedias, thesauruses, quotation books) to find answers to any questions your children have—the moment they have them. Children like immediate results and answers. Teaching them to use reference books can be self-gratifying to them, and can open up whole new worlds of information.

10. Share *your* reading with your children. Discuss what you are reading; read favorite passages. Your interest and enthusiasm in reading can inspire the same feeling in them. Children who see books and reading held in high esteem at home are bound to develop the same lifelong attitude.

Developing good study habits

While some children may swear that they can study with the tv blaring, while tossing a ball or eating a snack, it is rarely true. Most children need an environment free of distractions and interruptions in order to concentrate and fully comprehend their studies. Here are ways in which you can help:

1. Provide a comfortable, quiet place to study. If you can, give them a separate room where they can close the door and quietly work alone. Or...designate some area in your home that offers as much privacy as possible, with good lighting and a pleasant atmosphere.

2. Try to equip your children with a study desk, a comfortable chair and the necessary accessories—pencils, paper, erasers, etc. This will enable them to concentrate on the job at hand without having to stop to search for the things they need.

3. Be sure your children are in a healthy, relaxed state of mind. Children who are tired, hungry, anxious or distracted by something will accomplish little no matter how hard they try. If your youngsters feel the need to talk to you about a problem, help them resolve the problem ***before*** they get down to studying; otherwise, they'll spend their time worrying about the problem instead of concentrating on their homework. Likewise, if there's a need for you to talk to your children, or to discipline them for some reason, it's best to delay until their homework is completed.

4. Provide handy reference and source books so that your children can quickly and easily find answers to questions without wasting time and interrupting their concentration.

5. Help your children budget their time. If they have an extensive reading assignment, help them divide it up into several smaller, less imposing units that they can handle over a period of time. Also, if there are exams or special assignments coming up, help them make an outline of what must be done to be prepared for the test or to complete the project on time.

6. Try to set up a regular study period ***every day***. Be available if you can during this time to answer questions, or to help them with problems. This attention to developing good study habits is another way of showing your children that you are interested in their success in school.

Some dos and don'ts about at-home study...

DO permit some relaxation time. Children should not feel pressured to tackle studies the moment they arrive home. There should be an interval for refreshment, playing with a friend, or talking with you. A student needs time for relaxation, just as the adult who returns from a hard day's work needs a break before tackling household chores or a briefcase full of work from the office.

DO help draw up a study plan. If your children are having difficulty in getting homework finished, try to determine exactly how much time is needed for study. A half hour? An hour? Two hours? If you decide an hour is adequate, work out a schedule that provides enough time for study and still leaves some time for other activities before or after study.

DON'T constantly nag about homework. It's important to be firm and consistent in setting guidelines for at-home study. But it is better to let your children take the consequences for not completing homework than to nag them day after day.

Helping with homework

There are many ways to help make your child a winner, but when it comes to helping with homework it is important to remember this rule: provide help, but don't do their homework. By and large, it is better not to help at all than to do their work for them.

Every child needs to develop responsibility for following through with assignments. If you do the work for them, you only confuse them and defeat the whole purpose of the work. Helping "too much" can also cause your children to become too reliant on you.

If you find that your children consistently need help with homework, you should find out what the problem is before making any effort to help. Talk to your children to discover what's going on in the classroom. Don't push them if the work is too difficult. If the work appears too difficult on a continuing basis, discuss the matter with the teacher. And, finally, take a long, hard look at how you treat your children. Your behavior may be encouraging them to be too dependent on you.

If you're still not clear on how much help to give, perhaps the following answers will provide guidelines.

1. Should you simply help your children start their assignments, or stay with them throughout? That usually depends on the student and the assignment. You should always encourage your children to begin the work on their own, but be available to answer questions. If the difficulty of the assignment requires additional help along the way, however, sit down and stay throughout.

2. What should you do if you sense that your children need help but are afraid to ask for it? First you should try to find out what you have done to make them afraid to ask. Have you yelled at them too often? Have you become upset in the past when they asked for help? Have you given the impression that you're too busy to help? Think about it, then discuss it with them.

3. What if you offer your help and your children feel you are interfering? Perhaps you are. If your children say they don't need help, most likely they don't.

4. What if your children tell you they don't understand the assignments? Encourage them to ask for a conference with the teacher to discuss the problem. If, after the conference, the assignment is still unclear, phone the teacher and request a meeting so that all parties can

listen to the explanation. And always remember that most teachers are delighted to encounter parents who are interested in their children's success in school.

5. What if the teacher's explanation is clear but your children simply don't apply themselves? Then it's time to have a one-on-one conference with your children. Why aren't they applying themselves? If they tell you they're just not interested in a particular subject, remind them that if they don't pass the class now they'll just have to take it again.

6. What if you suspect that your children are really trying but are unable to learn at the same speed as their classmates? Talk with the teacher and ask how your children can get extra help. Quite often a teacher will work with students during a free period or after school. Many schools provide tutors for special assistance. If possible, discuss the problem with a student counselor.

7. What if your children experience difficulty in a particular subject in which you are ill-equipped to help? If you can't obtain help at school, perhaps a neighbor or friend will be willing to offer a few hours. Or another student or older brother or sister might be able to assist. If money isn't a problem, there are often professional tutors available who will come to your home to work with your children.

Remember, there are only 13 years from kindergarten naps to a high-school diploma, and only four more years to an undergraduate degree in college. These are years of growing and learning, years of false starts and questionable conclusions, years of high hopes and moments of tension. As an interested, involved parent, you can use the years to help transform your children into winning adults.

Test-taking tips

A test score is not always a measure of knowledge or intelligence. There are countless children who know the material but do not test well. Some do not react well to pressurized situations; others lack the confidence to perform up to their abilities. And still others have simply not learned how to take tests. Here is what you can do to help your children do better in test-taking situations.

GRADE SCHOOL

1. In grade school, children are primarily taught skills—reading, math, science, map-reading, writing, grammar. Familiarize yourself with the specific skills your children are learning.

2. Make up practice quizzes that will serve to reinforce skills and that are fun to do. For instance, before a grammar/spelling test, write your children a letter about an upcoming family project, trip or situation. Leave out all punctuation and allow several misspellings. Then let them "correct" your letter.

3. Many grade-school textbooks have sample test questions at the end of each chapter. Have your children review the chapters, then ask them the questions and review answers with them.

4. Teach your children how to listen to their teacher's "clues" about what is likely to be asked on a test. Statements such as "Now, pay attention to this" or "I want you to be sure to understand this point" should be recognized as "flags" to the questions that will be included on the test.

5. When a test has been announced, review the areas to be covered. Ask your children to determine their weakest areas, then give them extra help where required.

HIGH SCHOOL

1. Stress the importance of keeping up with homework assignments, and, when possible, doing extra credit work. The more time they spend on a subject, the more knowledge they will retain.

2. Prepare early for tests. Most educators believe that "cramming" provides nothing more than temporary, short-lived knowledge that disappears the moment the test is over. Help your children plan ahead for tests by reviewing contents in a systematic, scheduled manner.

They'll have a better chance of doing well and will retain more knowledge after the test.

3. Encourage note-taking and outlining as they go along. These will serve as important review tools for later tests.

4. Suggest that your children work with "study groups" prior to taking a test. The group can consist of fellow students, or family members if they have a knowledge of the subject.

COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMS

1. The scores that college-bound students receive on SAT and ACT standardized tests play a major role in acceptance into college. A disciplined approach to studying for these tests is by far the most effective way to do well on them. Several months before the test is scheduled, set up a daily review/study time. Spend at least a half hour each day reviewing subject areas that will be asked on the test, and place special emphasis on weak areas.

2. Invest in one or more of the SAT or ACT review books. These have sample questions that will provide an understanding of the scope of the test and the areas to be covered.

3. Teach your children how to best use their time once they have the test in front of them. They should first skim through the entire test to determine its length and difficulty; take note of how many questions and sections there are so that they can pace themselves; first answer the questions they know well, then return to the areas where they have little or no knowledge, and always keep track of time. When guessing at an answer, it is usually thought best to stick with the first answer, and not go back later to change it.

4. Additional help can be obtained from professional services that claim to teach students how to study for standardized tests, how to approach the tests, and how to relax throughout the tests.

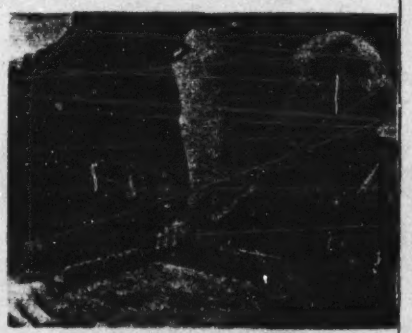
Test-taking is a pressure-filled, difficult experience for students at every level of education. As a parent, you can serve your children best by helping them build confidence and the self-esteem that will enable them to perform up to their abilities.

At-home activities

One of the most effective ways of showing your children that you sincerely want to help them succeed is to provide opportunities at home for them to practice what they are learning...and to encourage them to reach out and learn even more.

Home games and activities can be as enlightening as they are enjoyable, and if planned properly they can include every member of the family. For instance:

1. Write and produce plays. Ask your children to write a short play, "soap opera" or radio "mystery" about family situations, famous people, neighbors, dreams, anything that interests them. The possibilities are endless. You can read the play after dinner, or conduct a special "theater night" for the performance. This is a proven way to reinforce reading, writing and listening skills. And it has the added advantage of bringing the family closer together.



2. Play word games. ***Password***, ***Scrabble*** and ***Boggle*** are just a few of the popular vocabulary-building games that are fun as well as educational for the entire family. You can also make up your own sound- and word-recognition games.

3. Have a family reading hour. Set aside time on a regular basis (such as the hour immediately following dinner), and stop everything else going on in the home. Turn off the tv, dishwasher, radio, even the telephone if possible. Then, as a family, spend the time reading. Each family member should have a book, newspaper, magazine, recipe book, anything he or she chooses. This should be pleasure reading rather than homework. You can carry it one step further by ending the reading period with a discussion on what has been read.

4. Encourage your children to help plan family outings and trips. Let them map out the route on a road map. They can then figure out how much time it will take, how many stops you'll have to make, etc. It's excellent reading practice, as well as a good way to involve your children in "adult-type" decision-making.

5. Play finish-the-story games. Read a story aloud to your children, but stop before coming to the end. Have your children and other family members create their own ending to the story. This will help your children develop basic reading and thinking skills, to draw conclusions on their own, and to become familiar with cause-and-effect relationships.

6. Make a family tree. Have your children explore famous people, events, and quotes to coincide with different eras on your family tree. It will help them learn history while giving a new appreciation of your family background.

7. Read the newspaper. Introduce your children to world and local events by having a "current events" review two or three times a week. Ask your children to skim through the newspaper, pick out the most interesting (to them) articles, and report on them to the family.

8. Cooking, growing plants, cultivating a garden are all enjoyable projects with built-in science lessons to be learned. Explore how yeast and water, for instance, combine to create the physical effect of rising dough. Plant seeds and experiment with different kinds of care—direct sunlight, little sunlight, how much plant food, etc. Grow an outdoor garden in the summer and examine various aspects such as plants that keep insects away, how quickly different vegetables grow, and the total "yield" of the garden.

There are endless activities in which you and your children can participate in the home to help them prepare for success. But perhaps the most important of all is to communicate with them. Sometimes even the most well-intentioned parents forget to talk to their children, and, just as important, to listen to them.

All children have their own thoughts, their own problems, their own fears. And there's nothing they want more than the opportunity to communicate their feelings to their parents. Parents who complain that their teenage children don't talk to them, don't confide in them, can usually look back and find that they were "too busy" to talk and listen to their children when they were young.

Cultural Activities

Cultural activities are a part of going places and seeing things. You may not use the word "culture" when you speak of certain activities, but many of your children's activities do lie in the cultural field. It's in this area that you can make a valuable contribution to your children's experiences and growth.

1. Watch for announcements of local story hours, children's film showings, special holiday events and discussion sessions. These presentations most often take place at libraries, community centers, churches, even shopping malls—and represent a priceless opportunity to introduce your youngsters to cultural activities at an early age.

2. Encourage your children to become museum patrons. Your attitude toward museums affects your child. A tour of a museum of science and industry, a museum of natural history, or an art museum is a wonderfully enlightening experience for children of all ages.

3. Take advantage of culture in outdoor settings. For many adults, art and music take on a romantic and glamorous aura when experienced in an outdoor setting. This can be just as true for children. Take your children to outdoor art fairs. Introduce them to summer band concerts. Look around and you're sure to find culture under the sun and stars in your locality.

4. There is culture in television and radio, too. There are wondrous and world-shaping events that tv and radio bring to us as soon as they occur. Presidential elections, scenes from a coronation, a United Nations meeting, the launching of a satellite, and personal interviews with world figures are only part of the programming available to children.

5. Local high schools, church groups and community centers offer musicals and dramas that are relatively inexpensive and sometimes free. These productions are a joy to children of all ages, and seeing others perform often sparks an interest in performing themselves.

Music, art, dancing, the theater, books, television, radio: Introduce your children to these cultural activities at an early age, and you will help make them winners.

Getting along with others

Part of being a "winner" is the ability to live, work and play with others in a congenial, constructive way. You can help your children become successful in this important human arena by helping them learn a few basic skills.

1. Learn to give criticism tactfully. We can all criticize easily. But learning how to point out someone's shortcomings gently, in a way that can help the person overcome them, is a skill that can and should be learned. You can actually practice this with your children by using this skill when it's necessary to criticize them, and by allowing them to practice on you.

2. Encourage your children to be good listeners—to make eye contact, to nod to show they understand what's being said, and to hold their questions until the speaker is finished, instead of interrupting.

3. Involve your children in family decisions. Allowing them to help find solutions to problems, reach compromises, and find and share new ideas will show them the value of teamwork. And they will discover that group decisions can often be more interesting and creative than individual decisions.

4. Just as you praise your children and acknowledge their accomplishments, encourage them to do the same. They'll find that a positive word is the best way to win friends, to smooth over disagreements, and to have an enjoyable time with others.

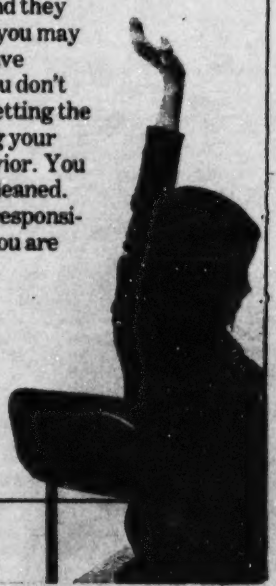
5. In order to get along with others, your children must learn not to be dependent on others to solve their problems. Of course, in order to learn how to solve problems, they need problems to solve. This is not as obvious as it may seem, since many parents become uncomfortable when their children have problems and as a result provide immediate solutions for them. Helping your children think through their problems may take longer, but when they know they have solved a difficult problem for themselves, their sense of self-esteem rises dramatically. And others think more of them, too.

Developing a sense of responsibility

"Winners" are people who have learned to be responsible for their actions. A sense of responsibility enables one to take justifiable pride in achievements and accept the reality of failures. Here are some important reminders when helping your children develop their sense of responsibility.

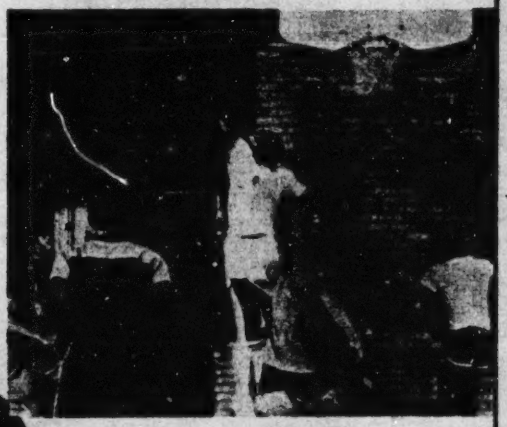
Most children do ***not*** develop responsibility as a result of conversation and discussion alone. Experience, both positive and negative, reinforces the learning of responsibility. When trying to develop responsibility or self-discipline in your children, the expectation and the consequence of their behavior should be clearly spelled out well ahead of time. By doing this, you make your children—instead of yourself—directly responsible for their behavior. Then the consequences ***must*** follow. Children who know what is expected of them and then see the consequences consistently learn to know that rewards, gratifications and punishments are largely in their own hands.

In the beginning, it is not most important that the expectation be met. It is ***more*** important that your children experience the consequence of their behavior and that they understand they are responsible for what has happened. For example, you may tell your children that they can't watch tv until they have cleaned their room. They fail to clean their room, so you don't let them watch their favorite show. Remember that getting the room clean is not, at this time, as important as allowing your children to experience the consequences of their behavior. You should not feel that you lost because the room wasn't cleaned. You (and your children) won because you made them responsible for their behavior and what happened to them. If you are consistent, responsible behavior will begin to emerge.



To strengthen their developing sense of responsibility, don't allow your children to become excessively dependent on you to perform tasks that you know they are physically or mentally capable of performing. This type of parent/child relationship makes it difficult for most children to learn independent and responsible behavior. Teach your children how to do things. The more skills your children have, the more competent they will be in finding new ways to be successful in doing things. When your children have control over material objects and know how to make things work, they will feel more responsible and build their own sense of worth.

Meeting your children's every need, giving them everything they want, letting them have their own way, and spoiling them may show that you love them, but it will interfere with the development of responsible behavior. The best way to show your love is to help make them strong.



Sportsmanship and sports

Winning in sports is important to almost every child. Yet many miss the equal importance of sportsmanship. Sore losers (or winners) can alienate others as well as create a frustrating, overcompetitive world for themselves. You can help your children develop a gracious, sportsmanlike attitude as well as their own individual athletic ability.

1. In family games, let your children referee on occasion: setting the rules, determining "fair play," judging plays. It will show them how to objectively look at sports and games, and how to judge others' behavior.

2. Play family sports games and reverse the scoring so that the "loser" wins. A slow swimming race, for example, can alleviate the typical competitiveness and be lots of fun!

3. Have your children measure their performance against themselves rather than others. Keep track of their performance in school or team sports: times, distances, speeds, etc. Focus on personal improvement rather than overall outcome of the competition.

4. If your children lose a game or are weak in a particular sport, practice with them. They'll soon learn that the only way to really improve is to work at it. Your interest will help them approach practice and improvement with more enthusiasm and good feeling.

5. Take up a new sport yourself. Show your children that it takes time, practice and discipline to become adept at a sport.

6. Help your children build coordination and balance by ensuring that they get proper nutrition, sleep and exercise. In preschool years, play games that will develop motor coordination, muscle control, eye/hand coordination: playing catch, running simple obstacle courses. Dancing, turning, moving to music and running can all contribute to strength, conditioning, coordination.

7. Get books on sports and sports stars for your children to read. Most sports heroes are quick to point out the many losing games it took before they began to master their skills.

8. Have patience and understanding with your children. Developing any skill—whether academic or athletic—takes a long time. There are many "steps" along the way that need your encouragement and attention. Growth and improvement can often be a painstaking process. If you can, patiently see your children through the many stages of growth, and help them develop persistence in reaching goals.

Summary

To sum up, there is much that you can do to motivate and inspire your children. Helping them set realistic, attainable goals and giving them the confidence to pursue and persist is a great contribution. And remember, all children perform at different levels. If you can urge them to approach new ventures with determination, relish and enjoyment, they will accomplish much in their lives. We hope this booklet has sparked some new ideas and will support your commitment to this end.

With the compliments

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ENCYCLOPAEDIA
BRITANNICA
USA

Britannica Centre
310 South Michigan Ave.
Chicago, Illinois 60604